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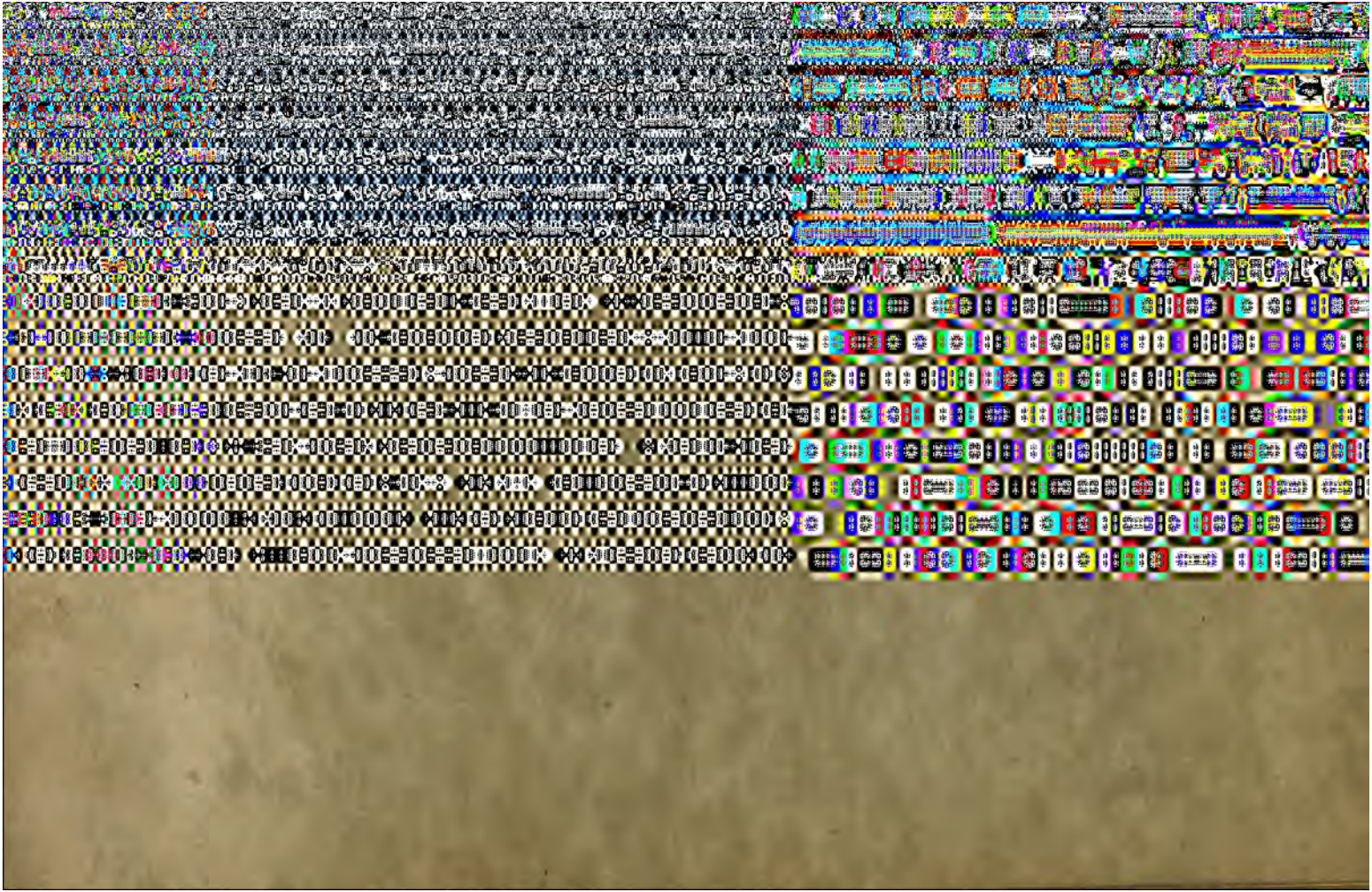

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# THOUGHTS

ON

# THE POINTS AT ISSUE

BETWEEN THE

## ESTABLISHED CHURCH

AND THE

## NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION IN IRELAND.

BY THE

REV. HENRY WOODWARD, A.M.

FORMERLY OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD.
RECTOR OF FETHARD, IN THE DIOCESE OF CASHEL.

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# PREFACE.

THE following sheets have lain by me for some days; ready for the press, but not committed to the printer's hand. The truth is, I had great difficulty in making up my mind respecting their publication. I felt indescribable pain at the idea, that many whom I respect and love, and whose friendship I value as one of the most cheering circumstances of life, may be alienated by my thus putting forward sentiments and principles so contrary to what I know to be their long-cherished habits of thinking, feeling, and acting. Nay, I anticipate, with additional concern, that not a few who, from reasons which are in these pages assigned, may have taken it for granted that my views were more in accordance with their own, will meet some of the following avowals of opinion, not only with disapproval, but with surprise. These motives made me hesitate for the present; and probably would have ultimately determined me not to publish, had I not yesterday cast my eye on the following report of the Parliamentary proceedings in the "Dublin Evening Mail:"—

"Mr. Shaw presented a petition from the Bishop and Clergy of the dioceses of Cashel and Waterford, in Ireland, declaring their sincere regret that they could not conscientiously support the present system of National Education in that country—disclaiming all political motives—pointing to the authoritative exclusion of the sacred Scriptures during the hours of general instruction as their great

objection, and praying that the system might be so far altered, as that, while all other religious books should be excluded during school hours, the Scriptures alone might be used at the discretion of the patrons and managers."

Of this petition I had never heard. But it is not my object, as far as I am concerned, to attribute any blame to the conductors. If the excellent Prelate, who of course must have taken the lead, had concluded that, as I have the happiness of agreeing with him on so many points, I concurred with him also in the prayer of this petition; and had he actually put down my name, I should not have been offended nor surprised, but rather have been grateful to his lordship for such a proof of free and friendly confidence. But let this matter stand as it may, —let it be that by an error of the "Evening Mail," "the diocese of *Cashel*" has been mentioned, or that, by a momentary inadvertence on the part of Mr. Shaw, these words were introduced; still the *appearance* of them in the public papers has turned the balance, so as to decide me on the publication of the following pages. If I cannot reasonably suppose that they will have much influence upon others, it will be a satisfaction to my own mind not to be misunderstood on points so frequently discussed; and on which it is so painful either to give an apparent consent by silence, or to engage in endless disputation.

H. W.

*Fethard Glebe,*
*May* 17, 1844.

# THOUGHTS,

*&c. &c.*

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No man who feels an interest in the concerns of this church and nation can view, without anxiety and alarm, the hostile position in which the great question of popular education has mutually placed a large and influential body of the clergy and the Government of the country. The National Board has received the sanction of two successive administrations. And these may be fairly taken as speaking the general sense of the body politic. The Queen and the two Houses of Parliament have, by the most solemn acts, announced their judgment of the matter. Both Whigs and Tories have, upon this point, been in full agreement. The people have, by their representatives, declared their minds. So that out of the materials of which any future parliament can be formed, no administration could be constructed which would not sanction and confirm the present form of national education. So fully bent is the Government which now sways the

destinies of the country upon carrying out this favourite project, that the Prime Minister is reported to have declared his intention of patronising and promoting those ecclesiastics only who will co-operate with him in the design. This report, however, seems to rest on but slender grounds; and it is well that it does so. For surely it were much to be deplored, that an administration who have hitherto dispensed their Church patronage with such clean hands, should, by a rash determination, tie up those hands from the further prosecution of so good a work. For, among the present opposers of the National Board are to be found some of the brightest ornaments of the Irish Church,—men with whom the few favourers of that system (with some brilliant exceptions, I grant) would but ill bear a comparison. And assuredly, if there are any who would, by the threats of such discountenance, be induced to leave the ranks of opposition, and to support a scheme which they did not conscientiously approve, their promotion would be an awful affliction upon the Church. Indeed, I fear this *imagined* threat (for I trust and believe it is no other) may operate altogether in an opposite way. It may prevent some from giving that free and unbiassed consideration to the subject which the time demands. In the first place, their judgment may be warped by a certain jealousy of themselves; for it is the rule of many conscientious men (and would it not be the safest rule for all?) in doubtful and delicate cases, to lean invariably to-

wards the side which makes against their private interests or selfish wishes. And besides, they may dread the suspicions which any apparent change of view, at such a moment, might naturally create, that they were acting on mean and temporising motives. It is on this account that I have been induced to submit a few brief thoughts, on the subject of national education, to the public eye. Better qualified, in other respects, as many are to call attention to this important matter, and clear as they might be of all *just* suspicion, yet, in one respect, I feel to stand on vantage-ground. The charge of yielding to the supposed threat of Government, of currying favour or seeking patronage, cannot, in the view of prejudice itself, attach to me. In the year 1834, I published a pamphlet on the subject of tithe, in the shape of a letter to the Right Honourable E. G. (now Lord) Stanley, in which the following passage occurs:—

"For my own part, in making these observations, I have no purpose to serve but the discharge of my own conscience. I seek the favour of no party. I expect no larger benefice than the one I hold; nor have I the slightest wish for advancement in the Church."

Ten years have made no alteration in my feelings or my wishes upon this point. And certainly, at my time of life, ten years additional have not renovated me with new strength to bear the burden of any higher responsibility in the ministry; a

responsibility which I am as unwilling, as I am unfit and unqualified, to undertake. I am led thus to obtrude *myself* upon the notice of the reader, because I do think it would be an awkward thing for a clergyman for the first time to advocate, or even to make any terms for the National Schools, unless he could protect himself from even feigned suspicions, by such a declaration. But even if, after this, my motives could appear equivocal, I think all doubt must be removed, by my proclaiming, that in itself, considered positively, and not comparatively, I do not approve the plan referred to. In a word, I do not like joint education in any form. The best instruction of that kind would be purely secular, without any attempt at religious teaching. It would be reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. taught just as shoe-making or gardening might be, without any reference to spiritual concerns. Even to this, however, there are, I think, great objections. And such a system is sure to act disadvantageously upon whatever sect is in the minority, particularly if the disproportion be very great. In this part of Ireland, it is much against the Protestant religion. In every mixed society the stronger has, *cæteris paribus*, a steady tendency to win upon the weaker party. The law of opinion, the instinct to go with the stream and follow the multitude, the power of attraction by which lesser are invariably drawn to greater bodies—all this is upon the side of *numbers*. These tendencies are and must be felt in schools

formed, in this country, upon the plan of united education. They must act, I say, with peculiar force in *schools;* because *there* these unequal and antagonist forces are brought into close and immediate contact. Every thing in such a scene is calculated to cheer and animate the predominating caste, while the few scattered sheep who are of another fold venture in amongst them with timid steps, and are under the constant temptation of being ashamed of themselves and their religion. Besides this, however, joint education may facilitate the spread of such religion as can be thus communicated, and scatter it over an extended surface, it is not, in my opinion, favourable to that which can alone be rightly called religion, I mean the religion of the heart. I confess I feel more anxious, in all spiritual concerns, for quality than quantity. I love to see the filial eye and full repose of confidence with which the pupil looks on his own spiritual pastor, as if he could trust him as, under God, the shepherd of his soul. In the vast wholesale machinery of national education, I am afraid that, while *something* is provided for all, nothing excellent is provided for any; I am afraid that while a general average stamp is given to the population, and while *the many* are raised somewhat above their former level, that this advantage must be secured at the expense of *the few*, who, under a more special training and fostering influence, would shine in all the native loveliness of undefiled religion. I dread

that in those great systems where teachers and learners must give and take with those of discordant creeds, so as to produce a compound on which all may be kept alive, that none will receive such nutritious food as to attain to vigorous health and manly stature.

These great moral manufactures may, at a cheap rate, hurry off thousands and ten thousands of instruments for common use, but none of them will reach the polish and perfection which the hand of the artificer alone can give. They may throw some scattering of light upon the general population; but no Samuels will "grow before the Lord," no Timothys will "of a child so know the Scriptures as to be wise unto salvation." There will be in the schools no such early samples of the power of religion pure from the fountain and living in the heart; none such as Legh Richmond, in his "Young Cottager," sets before us. In what is called joint religious education, there must be guards and cautions; there must be an impression in the children's minds that their instructors, if of a different persuasion, are not fully to be trusted; or, if of their own persuasion, are withheld from using the unfettered language of the heart. Whether they feel it so or not, their teachers must be more or less straitened by the position in which they stand. They are thrown into a stiff and artificial attitude, of all others least favourable to that flow of love which passes and repasses from heart to heart; where all,

young and old, rich and poor, master and scholar, are of the same body, members one of another, aboard the same ship, and bound in the same "bundle of life." With these views, I have often thought that the best plan would be for each religious sect to educate its own children. I much fear that the schemes hitherto adopted for bringing all persuasions to what are called scriptural schools was but a triumph in appearance over the opponents of that system; and that they sacrificed the genuine and affectionate instruction of the Protestants in the *spirit* of God's Word, to a cold and unnatural forcing of its *letter* upon the Roman Catholics, which could not by possibility do them good. I have ever thought that, as things are, if our first and paramount object were to benefit Roman Catholics and their children, the best way of effecting this would be by redoubled efforts to train up our own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to educate and foster in the ways of holiness and true happiness the comparatively few poor Protestants whom God has committed to the care of the comparatively many rich Protestants in this country; so to fulfil our immediate trust, our proximate and unequivocal duties, that Roman Catholics may see some proofs that we believe our own religion before we would force it upon them; that they may give us credit for wishing to benefit their children when they see that we are anxious for our own; and, consequently, that our plans are not

mere political traps for their conversion to the Established Church, laid by those who care not whether their children or our own are converted unto God. Besides this, if the rising Protestant generation were educated as Protestants, with their comparative abundance of wealth, ought to educate them, they would become "living epistles known and read of all men;" "epistles of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." To such children as ours ought to be, we could point, and say to our Roman Catholic brethren, "Behold here are we and the children which God has given us. You see what scriptural education can effect. These are the fruits of our instructions, the disciples of our schools, the answers of our prayers."

Such were my impressions on the subject; and feeling that I was not called upon to take any part beyond the limits of my own parish, I was satisfied that if *there* I could have a school in accordance with my own views, I was not required either to oppose or to co-operate with the National Board of Education. My objections to it were, as I conceived, almost peculiar to myself. They applied equally to the principles and to the schemes of those who most pointedly opposed it. Much as I respected many of the leading agents in other general plans of popular instruction, there were ingredients in their several systems which I could not conscientiously approve.

And seeing that the national system declared itself in favour of joint education, that was enough for me. I felt uninterested about its details; I never took its merits, in other respects, into consideration. I had, from casual conversations, some general notion of its machinery; but I did not think myself called on to go into particulars. The matter was not forced upon me; nor did I feel myself obliged, as in that case I might have done, to make the best of a bad bargain. I left it as a thing which was in the hands of God, and not in mine. And thus I was glad, in this hotly agitated question, to be on no side, which, in spite of the apparent blunder, is, in my mind, very generally the best side. But still there are occasions in which neutrality itself is put in motion: there are conflagrations so fierce and so contagious that the most incombustible materials take fire. And thus it is that I feel it, for the first time, a kind of duty to take a part in what I thought it a privilege to keep aloof from. I come forth, as it were, from my peaceful hiding-place, and find the country in a blaze. The Government determined on carrying through a plan, as they think, for the political and religious benefit of the country; and the Clergy of the National Church not only refusing co-operation with, but placing themselves in opposition, interposing themselves as an obstacle, to the execution of so favourite a design. I see the vessel of the Church running foul of the vessel of the State — the ship which bears the ark just dashing upon the rocks;

the Church, assailed as she is in other quarters, upon the point of a concussion which may shake her to her foundations — a shock which threatens to "divide asunder her soul and body;" and, while the gates of Hell cannot prevail against the former, to break down all her earthly strongholds, and to level her temporal establishment and temporal honours in the dust.

But some of my brethren will say, "We are answerable for duty, not for consequences. We must obey God and not man: we lament the crisis which has brought us into this perilous and anomalous position: we are aware of its disadvantages, we see its dangers, but we have not willingly incurred or wantonly provoked them. We know that, amidst all our present trials, we are 'adding yet this above all,' that we are provoking the Government to join the confederacy against us. We know that we may be turning an administration which was our best friend into a reluctant but determined foe. We know that in fighting what we think the battles of the Scripture, we are endangering the existence of the establishment, that great instrument which seemed to be God's providential means of asserting the rights of conscience, of resisting the tyranny of ghostly despotism, and of lifting up the standard of God's Holy Word amongst the millions of this country. We know this, and we deplore it, but '*is there not a cause?*'"

On this question it is that the whole matter

hinges. And I confess that, on their own avowed principles, registered in formal, written and authorised statements, and repeated and reasserted over and over again at public meetings, I cannot see what there is to prevent the members of the Church Education, the Kildare Place, and if there be any other Society of kindred views, from acting individually, and in their several locations, under the rules of the National Board. Observe, I am not at all mooting the point, whether the Government are right or wrong in the establishment of that Board; or whether in the original construction of the system there were not incongruous blendures and admixtures; whether there was not somewhat of a bending of concerns too high for man to model or to mould, so as to become manageable and convenient, and fitted for human purposes. But indeed it is very easy, in difficult cases, where *we* are not called to act, to sit in our quiet chair and find fault with Government who *must* act. It may be amusing to busy spirits, but it is often very absurd, and very wrong, to bring our abstract notions to bear upon the movements and measures of those who have to work a vast and intricate and complicated machine. A machine which must perhaps stop or altogether run down, unless prompt and decisive steps are taken, one way or the other, on the most sudden emergencies, or in the most perplexed and doubtful cases. But the point for our consideration is not

what Government ought to do, but what *we* ought to do.

And still it is very difficult to get some persons to keep this clear distinction in their minds. They talk of joining or not joining, what they call the National Education Society. But nothing, properly so called, exists. One might as well call obedience to an act of Parliament joining the Parliament society. If, indeed, as in religious or other such associations, a set of independent individuals unite together to originate or carry into execution a plan or purpose; and if we voluntarily enrol ourselves in their number, we become morally accountable for all the principles of the scheme, and all the ingredients of the compound. But the case before us is totally of another kind. And it may be that many of the clergy in prescribing to their rulers what *their* duty is, have forgotten that which is properly *their own.* They have neglected, at least, to give a calm and dispassionate consideration to what part it would be wise in them, under existing circumstances, to act. And here I must avail myself of the opportunity of questioning the soundness of a principle, or rather scruple, which has exercised an influence on many minds. Those upon whom it acts are disposed to reason thus: "We might perhaps establish a National School conducted on our own principles. Ours is a Protestant locality, and we might have a Protestant school; or, our Roman

Catholic neighbours are so liberal and on such friendly terms with us, that we doubt not *their* children would willingly receive scriptural instruction with *our own.* But if we applied for a grant, we should be sanctioning a system which holds out equal facilities to schools where Protestants are discouraged and the Bible is denied admittance." But I believe this thought, namely, that unless we can govern the Government, and teach them how to apply the revenues of the state, we cannot conscientiously accept of any thing at their hands; I believe such a thought or scruple, in no other instance, suggests itself to the mind. No Protestant chaplain to a gaol, or workhouse, hesitates to take his salary, because Government may, in his apprehension, be wrong in employing the services of a Roman Catholic priest. The same may be said with respect to our Colonial bishops. Indeed the principle alluded to, if fully carried out, would unhinge the whole framework of society. There is no telling the ramifications to which this strange misconception might not reach. Very scrupulous officers of the civil and military services might refuse their pay, because, contrary to their principles, a college had been established at Maynooth. They might inflate themselves into a kind of martyrdom for conscience sake, and say to the Government, "Touch not the unclean thing, or we can have no connexion with you. It would be owning and sanctioning you if we drew our pay — your money is infected, your Treasury is pol-

luted, and we will have nothing to say to you. Live as we may, we will not be partakers in your sin." Such a notion never regulated men's conduct in public life: and it would be equally preposterous in private intercourse. No sensitiveness of scruple was ever yet so morbid as to refuse the offered payment of a just debt, or the satisfaction of a rightful claim from a creditor, because he wasted the rest of his substance in riotous living.

Dismissing, then, this objection as untenable and absurd, what moral impediment is there in the way of a clergyman or layman of the established Church becoming the patron of a National School? The following, let it be kept in mind, are standing orders of the Board:—

"The Patrons of the several Schools have the right of appointing such religious instruction as they may think proper to be given therein, provided that each School be open to children of all communions; that due regard be had to parental right and authority; that, accordingly, no child be *compelled* to receive, or be present at, any religious instruction to which his parents or guardians object; and that the time for giving it be so fixed, that no child shall be thereby, in effect, excluded, directly or indirectly, from the other advantages which the School affords. Subject to this, religious instruction may be given either during the fixed school hours or otherwise."—(*Rules and Regulations*, II. 3.)

And further,—

"The reading of the Scriptures, either in the Protestant authorised or Douay version, as well as the teaching of Catechisms, comes within the rule as to religious instructions."—(6.)

Now, in a system of joint education, what, I would ask, could a patron desire more than this? What could he wish beyond being enabled to read and explain the Scriptures for an hour each day to his own children, and to as many others as are willing to avail themselves of the opportunity; and, besides that, to convey whatever additional religious instruction he may think fit? But, again, something like the shadow of the former objection meets us, and it is said, "Oh, yes! this is very well in favourable localities, where Protestants can have such schools; but if we establish these, the priests will, where they have the upper hand, set up schools in which the whole of this would be reversed, and they will have it all to themselves." To this I answer, that the thing apprehended is already done. The priests are already patrons of numerous schools; and, therefore, what is already done, cannot follow, as a consequence, upon any present or future act of ours. But, even supposing that the clergy had not, by a sad mismanagement, thrown the whole working of the system hitherto into the hands of their opponents; suppose that all were to start afresh, and there were no pre-occupied ground, what sense would there be in this argument? "I might have a school under Protestant management *here;* but, because a priest may have one under Roman Catholic influence *there*, I will have none." Now, if a National School under a priest were so great an evil that it were better for me to have no

school in my locality, than for him to establish one in his, and if my denying *my* children the bread of life could prevent *his* from learning the Roman Catholic catechism, why, on certain ultra-principles, there might be some meaning (however strange a meaning) in making this fearful sacrifice. But the case is not so. My refusing to be the patron of one school will not prevent the priest from being the patron of another. Nay, I only open an additional door for him. And here, I fear, a sad irreparable loss has been sustained. In multitudes of places, where there might have been schools under Protestant management, the opportunity is irrecoverably lost, and the priest is in possession of the field. But to recur to the point in hand. Grant that, by some magic power, not of sympathy, but of antipathy, when a Protestant (so to call it) school appeared, one or more Roman Catholic schools must immediately start into life;—what injury could the Protestant religion receive thereby? What detriment, I say, would children of that persuasion—a few scattered amongst a teeming population of Romanists—incur from the establishment of a national school under the management of the priest? I grant it would be much better for them if it were under the authorised pastor of the parish, and that is the main point to which I would invite attention. But admit that the priest is in possession of the school, and that this has arisen from the great preponderance of Romanism in that locality;

in this supposed case there is, of course, no Protestant school, of any kind, for the children of our own profession. Well, then, if there were no national school, there would be one, probably more than one, on the old system; that is, entirely, without check or control, in the hands of the priest. Which, I ask, would it be better for these children to attend in a place where, if the Protestant clergyman or laity were vigilant, or if the conductors had one spark of honesty, their religion could not be interfered with—where no books but those of the purest morals were introduced—where some order and decency were observed, or to go to a miserable hovel, where, if their creed was insulted, there was no one to stand up for them—where, if another religion were systematically inculcated, and they were daily taught the Roman Catholic catechism, there was no one authorised or entitled to object, and where there was a free and unfettered use of every foul and filthy production of a press teeming with traps for the purity of youth, and poison for the morals of the country; which, in a word, would it be better for the Protestants to attend upon, a National or a Hedge School (and to one or the other they assuredly would go under the circumstances we have supposed); the former under the patronage of the priest, guided by the rules and regulations of the Board, the latter under the entire and despotic dominion of the same priest, responsible to no authority but that which binds him to employ

every engine in his power to pervert, or, as he would think to convert, the Protestant children? And, indeed, in addition to all this, I must be allowed to say, that in districts (and such we are now speaking of) where there are a very few, perhaps not half a score, children of the Established Church, any lack of religious instruction might be amply made up by the personal exertions of the clergyman. Where the flock is so small, one would think that a vigilant pastor would want no human aid, besides that of the parents at home, to bring up these few lambs in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What is to prevent a minister, with such abundant leisure, from having a constant eye to his own little flock at the time appointed by the Roman Catholic patron for religious teaching, besides what is done at his Sunday School and in his visits from house to house?

But it is maintained by some that if Protestants were to evince a real anxiety to carry on the avowed system of the board, and to see their rules punctually enforced, the Roman Catholics would retrace their steps, withdraw their co-operation, and abandon the whole design. Be it so. And what would be the result? Why, either that the whole machinery must become Protestant, or the present plan of National Education must be given up; either the one or the other being assuredly a consummation devoutly to be wished by those to whom, in particular, I address these obser-

vations. And then, supposing the bone of contention removed, and the failure of the plan to be occasioned in this way, on what footing would the clergy of the two churches stand, respectively, in the view of the Government? Those of the establishment having given, as far as lay in them, a full and fair trial of their favourite scheme, and the Roman Catholics having, on that very account, refused to lend their aid, the whole blame would fall upon the latter. Whereas, if the opposition made by so great a portion of our clergy to the measure had been successful, the project on which Government set so high a value would have been relinquished it is true, but the charge would come down in full weight upon our Church of having refused obedience to the Government, and obstinately resisted a plan devised on liberal and impartial principles for the improvement and tranquillity of the country. In all these observations, let it be kept in mind, that I am arguing *ad hominem.* I am submitting considerations to the great body of the clergy, on their own admitted principles and favourite maxims. And one of these latter is, that the Roman Catholics are in general desirous that their children should read the Scriptures. It is allowed, indeed, that parents are frequently controlled in this respect by the influence of the priest; but still not so far as to prevent these wishes from coming into practical and extensive operation. In fact, it is upon this

latter notion that the claims of the Kildare Place Society, and others also, are chiefly rested. Nor is this a ground which they took in more palmy days, and which late circumstances have led them to abandon. The fact was never more confidently and emphatically asserted than a few days ago, at the great meeting of the Church Education Society, where one of the most distinguished ornaments of that body represented, with the apparent concurrence of the whole assembly, the Roman Catholics of the country as favourable to, nay, anxiously desirous of, scriptural instruction for their children. If this be the case, what can be better fitted to gratify their wishes than a National School under a Protestant patron? There, supposing all to be unanimous, the whole Bible may form the basis of instruction, even during school hours. But, at any rate, an hour may be appointed (and surely the Roman Catholics have not so keen an appetite for the Scriptures that a whole hour each day is not sufficient) at which every parent of every denomination can have his child instructed in the sacred volume. But it may be answered, the Roman Catholic children would not attend on these occasions. Why, I ask, if their parents are so desirous that they should learn the Bible? Why should those who would be anxious to send their children to a Kildare Place School to learn the Scriptures be unwilling for them to hear or read the same Scriptures in one under the National Board? Will

it be said; Because they know that nothing of a religious nature but the simple Word of God would be taught in the former, while, in the latter, the peculiar tenets of the Protestant Churches may be added? No, this reason cannot hold, because the patron who prefers the Kildare Place system is at perfect liberty to introduce that system, and nothing but that system, into his school, and make it the whole of his religious teaching. And of this he can, indeed he must, give notice to the surrounding neighbourhood, by having it publicly posted in the school-room. Were I, however, myself asked the question, whether Roman Catholics would send their children as much—I do not say as freely—to the Bible reading of a National School as they do, or, at least, as they used to do, to that of a Kildare Place School, could I say in truth and sincerity that they would? No, I could not. I do not believe they would. But why? Because the plan of the latter was to withhold the benefit of secular education from all who would not read the Scripture, while it is the wish and design of the conductors of the former to place the Word of God only in free hands, and to present it only to willing minds. And where the choice is really and *bonâ fide* given, where there is no worldly interest to serve, or secular bribe to tempt, I believe a comparatively small number of the Romanists of this country would wish their children to read the Scripture—that is, unless their priests desired it. In fact, the

parents have never read the sacred book themselves —they know not its contents; how then can they desire it for their children? They think that the priests are better acquainted with this volume than they are, and are better judges of its probable effects upon their children. They leave the matter thus, quite contented that they should read it if the priest thinks fit, and just as willing that they should not read it if the priest objects. This seems to me the true solution of the matter, and to explain the meaning of that which is put forward with so much prominence, namely, that the people are willing for their children to read the Scriptures, but that their priests will not permit it. This way of putting it seems to intimate that the Roman Catholics have a will of their own, or any thing like a positive wish, on the subject. This I doubt. One might as well say that if the pilot were to ask the captain of a vessel, in a spirit of perfect obedience and ready to do precisely as he was directed, whether he should steer to the north or to the south, and that the captain were to say "To the north," that he (the pilot) was willing, nay, that he wished, to steer to the south, but that his commander would not permit him. Matters being so, that is, the Roman Catholics being conscientiously disposed to submit to their priests on the subject of scriptural education, the question is, would you force or would you bribe them to go against their conscience? Would you say as one lately did to me, "If their consciences

were free I would respect them; but when their conscience is in captivity to their priest, I doubt that it would be wrong thus to bribe them to act against it." This is one of the evils which a spirit of controversy creates. And it is wonderful to what lengths even good men may go, into what extremes of opinion they may be driven, into what madness they may be chafed, while the fever of controversy is upon them. I heard a person who, upon other subjects, was Christian, kind, and sensible, boldly assert this strange and horrid paradox. I question, said he, whether it be unlawful to tempt a Roman Catholic, by a direct pecuniary bribe, to renounce his religion. And the reason he assigned was this: To hold out worldly inducements in matters of religion, was in itself, he granted, a grievous sin. But then in offering such temptations to a Roman Catholic, you do not bribe him to renounce his duty to God. His religion is from beneath, and obedience to that is obedience to the devil; and, therefore, bad as the world is, it is better for him to make that his god, than to fall down and worship the devil. It is painful to see how charity and moderation, how all that is gentle and all that is lovely in religion, spread their soft wings and fly away, where the din of controversial strife and theological hatred jar upon the ear. Surely it would be better to err much, nay, in what some would call fundamental doctrine, and to possess the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and

to feel the soft repose, the peaceful calm, the blessed Sabbath, the opening heaven of love to God, and love to man, than to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and to be devoid of that "charity, without which all our doctrines and all our doings are nothing worth." Surely that tree of life, which God transplanted from the Paradise above into this earthly soil, cannot bear the bitter fruits of malice, hatred, and contention. If "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." If we see the graces of humility, purity, and love, adorning the life and beautifying the conversation, shall we call such amiable exhibitions of true religion, such living images of Christ—shall we "call them reprobate silver," splendid cheats, specious counterfeits, because we cannot discern a root beneath the surface exactly squaring with what we have settled as the standard of faith? Oh, that we were all contented to be no wiser than the Fountain of all wisdom, and would say with Him, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart," disposed to love all such, of whatever sect or party, with more than a brother's love! "By their fruits," says our Saviour, "ye shall know them." "The tree," he adds, "is known by his fruit." Let us not, then, reverse the truth of God. Let us not judge the fruits by the tree, or by the root, still less by a tree of our own planting, and a root of our own imagining. For my own part, had I the

power, by a volition of the mind, of moulding the materials of society into the form I wished, my wish would be that the prejudices of party were so removed that all good men would view one another without suspicion; and that where they mutually saw the effect produced, the end attained; that when lucid proof was given that the heart of stone had become the heart of flesh, that the same mind that was in Christ Jesus filled the soul, and the power of God's peaceful spirit calmed the bosom, that in this case they would not be "over exquisite" to inquire into the means, the shades of doctrine, or preparatory steps of discipline, by which each had ascended to this blessed consummation, and now rested upon God's holy hill. I am persuaded, that if sincerely religious men of all denominations made the cause of vital godliness their common cause, and were not ashamed to call each other brethren, that a new and brighter day would dawn upon these countries. From such a blessed amity men would begin to understand in what the kingdom of God essentially consisted; "not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Scoffers would find no food for mockery, but reverence what they had despised before. They would acknowledge that revelation was more than an empty name when they saw "how Christians loved one another." The prayer of the great Intercessor would then come into remembrance before God. That unity for which He cried to

Heaven, and which the Infant Church displayed, would again revisit the earth. The soul of the Church would then be visible to men's eyes. The sections of her mere body might still contend, and "the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth;" and each might arrogate to itself pre-eminence, might collect its dry bones, and compress and force them into contact, and call that the unity of the Church. But against such claims there is a natural sense, there is a spirit in man that instinctively revolts. Those who are *in* such a system partake of its nature, are involved in the clouds, and love the delusions which envelope it; but those that are without hold back and refuse to enter into its secrets, or to wear its chains of darkness. But "let God arise, and his enemies will be scattered;" let the true unity appear, let the living stones begin to move by the power of mutual attraction, and to insert themselves into the living temple; let the heirs of glory and inheritors of God's kingdom claim kindred one with another, and join hand and heart together; let those who are in vital union with the Triune God be at unity with themselves; and from the vibration of these harmonious instruments, and these vessels of honour, will go forth a sound which will reach the remotest corners of the globe, and the world will believe and know that "God sent forth his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Convinced I am that if those who form the soul of their respective religious bodies could present to each

other the attractive, and not the repellent, poles of their theology, the most blessed effects and consequences would result. It is true, that fiery disputants might lament their occupation gone, and sigh for some breeze of controversy to stir the deadness of the present calm; they might mourn after the days of commotion, bustle, and excitement, now to return no more; they might, by a dexterous bending of Scripture, in which they are so well practised, apply to their own case the language of the Psalmist, and say one to another, "Oh! come hither, and behold the works of the Lord: what destruction he hath wrought upon the earth. He maketh war to cease in all the world; he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire." But, in spite of the complaint of those whose craft would be in danger, it is the firm conviction of my heart, that if good men would cease from all controversy except the following, a new order of things would arise; "truth would spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from Heaven." Let them then put their creeds to a practical test, nay, to an infallible one, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; let them try who can live best, who can do most good, who can most adorn the Gospel; let them try whom the language of the Patriarch best befits, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me:

"Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.

"The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." (Job, xxix. 11–13.)

Let them try who can, with most consistency, adopt the words of the Apostle, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Let this be the contest between the churches; let them try who can send up the devoutest prayers to God, and pour down the purest streams of beneficence upon earth, and then, agreed upon the greater matters of the law, the lesser matters, no longer magnified into undue importance, would soon be capable of fair adjustment. Yes, I do say lesser matters, for if men love the Lord their God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves, I do repeat, on the highest authority, that no points in dispute between the sections of the Christian Church can come into comparison with these. Let men be of one heart and one soul, and they will possess the likeliest means of being of one opinion and one profession. They will wish to agree, and that is one step towards it; they will love one another, and that will be a further step. And besides this, their minds will be serene and calm, their reason bright and clear, their understandings in healthful play and vigorous

exercise, no longer warped by prejudice nor darkened by the mists of angry passions. In short, men so disposed will, in the search of truth, give a fair trial to the faithfulness of our Saviour's promise, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

But is not all this a digression from the matter in hand? What has all this to say to the comparative claims of the National Schools, and other rival plans of joint education, and general instruction? I answer, "Much every way." If the Roman Catholic religion be, as some would seem to argue, a system of unmingled evil; if it be an apostasy from God, and that to belong to that communion imply, at least, the imminent peril of the soul, why, in that case, one would venture to the very verge of what was absolutely unlawful, to rescue brands out of this burning. But if we take a milder view of the errors of that system; if, thankful, as we ought to be, for the free air we breathe; and sensible, as we ought to be, of our great deliverance from its servitude and bondage, we, nevertheless, believe that Roman Catholics may be good men, and train up their children in virtuous living and substantial piety, we feel more at liberty to canvass well the nature of the means employed in weaning them from the faith of their forefathers. Important, as it doubtless is, that they should, from an early age, know the Scripture; yet, if they *may* seek and find salvation in a church which restricts their use, we cannot feel

justified in releasing them from that restriction at the expense of cutting that tender, sacred tie which binds the child in obedience to the parent. "Honour thy father and thy mother," is the language of those very Scriptures themselves; it is announced by them as the "first commandment *with promise;*" that promise being the germ of all good, the early budding and incipient exercise of that principle which, fostered by the dew of Heaven, and by the gracious influences from above, will ascend "through Nature up to Nature's God," through earthly parents to the Eternal Father. Let there then be no tampering with filial piety; and let not those who justly blame the Romanists for omitting the second commandment in their catechisms, provoke the keen retort, that *they* ought to expunge the fifth commandment from the Scriptures which they teach. Nor let there be any temporal lures held out to parents to go against their consciences in sending their children to scriptural schools. Say not to them, this is a *sine quâ non;* your children must read the Bible, or be denied the advantages of secular teaching; in other words, be disqualified for obtaining an honest livelihood. Neither, I would add, let salaries be given to Roman Catholic masters to read the Scriptures; when the great probability is, that they would undertake that office on the basest and most disingenuous motives. And here I would address a few words to some of the popular advocates of compulsory Scrip-

ture reading. "You admit, on the one hand, that the priests are averse to the introduction of the whole Bible into schools. Nay, you assert that they feel the carrying or not carrying this point of discipline to be almost the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ.* You allow, therefore, that if the Roman Catholic children attend your schools, they do in so grave a matter renounce the authority of their pastors. All this you admit, on the one hand; and on the other hand, you disclaim the design or wish to make these children proselytes. You pledge yourselves to make no attempt or effort to effect this purpose: you discourage the very notion of converting them. Well, then, in what position would you leave the great body of our rising population? You would leave the lambs without shepherds, good or bad. You would teach them, encourage them, nay, bribe them to disobey their present pastors; and, at the same time, covenant and promise, that, as far as you are concerned, they shall not be handed over to any others."

But, as I said before, those who take a calmer view of men and things are not driven to these awkward shifts and doubtful doings. They can weigh matters in a juster balance; they can leave events more in the hands of God; and feel more at ease about their issue. In fact, as it respects the question whether such a forcing of the Scriptures can be our duty, they are, if I may so speak, doubly at their ease: I. They do not own it as a matter of

life or death, or of the last extremity, whether the point so pressed be gained or not. II. These coercive plans appear to them, in the general, not only to have failed, but to have recoiled upon the projectors. For never has Romanism flourished more, or put forth greater energies, than while it was the fashion of the day, by any agencies, or instruments, or means, underhand or overhand, to press the hearing or reading of the Bible upon the people. The truth is, that the Scripture is a sacred and a holy thing; nor can such rude handling of the Word of God be pleasing in his sight. And much, I fear, has been exhibited in the practice and conversation of the subordinate agents in these schemes, to prejudice the simple and ignorant against the free and willing reception of the message of salvation.

But now to the principal point in hand. What have clergymen and laymen who approve of joint education, and are, at the same time, friends to liberty of conscience — what have they to object to in National Schools, of which they may themselves be patrons? In truth, if education is to be provided for the whole people; and if that is to be, not a separate but a united education for all classes, I cannot conceive a more unexceptionable and liberal system than that provided by the Board. The Bible, the whole Bible is freely given to all who will freely accept the boon. Secular instruction is afforded to all alike. The children are, in this latter department, brought into friendly and harmo-

nious contact; but there is no effort to mingle what is too hallowed for human hands to blend. Therefore when religious instruction is to be given, the children, if their guardians desire it, are separated.

My first impression when I heard of the plan of National Education was, I will confess, that, in the discipline of the schools, an unholy attempt was ventured on, so to amalgamate discordant creeds, as to form a kind of neutral compound for the scholars: whether any thing of this kind entered into the original intention of the Board, I know not, for I have very little acquaintance with the subject: but assuredly, in the present conduct of the plan, they are wholly cleared of such a charge. On the contrary, one of the grand objections of the Committee of the Church Education Society to the National Board, is that they will not sanction the very amalgamation I so much deprecate. But let the former speak for itself:—

"The Committee cannot co-operate with the National Board, because they believe that, if they could lay aside their other objections to it, it is, in its practical working, calculated to widen the breach already existing between the several orders of religion in the country. The system of education adopted by the Board does not even profess to effect an union of the children of different religious denominations in its schools, in the sense in which such an union would be chiefly desirable, namely, in receiving religious instruction. The principle on which the system is founded, is to combine them in receiving secular instruction, separating them where religion is concerned—thus making more

apparent than ever the diversity of religious belief, and impressing the minds of the children with the idea that however they may look on each other as fellow-citizens, they cannot regard each other as fellow-Christians, who hold in common any principles of revealed truth."

And here I would put it to my reverend brethren, in general, whether their impression, on this subject, was not similar to mine; and whether their main objection to the National Board was not that it attempted a blendure of the several religious creeds, which implied an infidel under-valuation of them all. And I would now ask whether, with this extract before them, they can continue of that opinion; nay, whether the charge does not lie in full force against the opposers of the Board. But it will be said, "Oh, but the joint education which these objectors propose is not a compound of human systems, but the unadulterated word of God." Yes, but if the Scripture is to be so read, that a kind of engagement may be entered into, that it shall not proselyte the learners of any denomination; if, like the medical doctors, the teachers can *warrant* to the Roman Catholics, that this medicine (though nauseous enough to them) may be taken by their children *with perfect safety;* what is all this but the most thorough meeting of extremes, narrowness itself, and ultra-liberality embracing one another, the whole Bible forced upon the willing and unwilling, and then declared to be so accommodating

and neutral, that it leaves its readers just as it had found them; taking all sects and parties into its capacious bosom, and saying,

"Tros Tyriusve mihi, nullo discrimine habetur?"

Such a system is, as I have already said, but an empty flourish, the mere show of victory over an opposite principle. If "the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," how is it possible that its light should flicker along the whole range of discordant doctrines, as harmlessly as the lambent flame upon the head of the boy Iulus? No; this could not be, but by some deadening process which rendered "the Word of God of none effect." If, then, the friends of joint religious teaching refuse to make up a compound of their own, they do so on the principle that the Scripture has provided such an amalgamation already to their hand.

Since my attention was attracted to this subject, I have conversed upon it with not a few of my clerical friends, whom I had taken it for granted were unfriendly to the national system. They were indeed practically of that number, as they had passively fallen into the ranks of those who refuse to co-operate with the Board. But were I to take them as a sample of the general body of its clerical

opponents, and I believe they are a fair one, I should come to the following conclusion:—That were the clergy examined, one by one, it would be found that the great majority have thought very little on the subject for themselves, and have followed the lead of a few who have been used to dictate in such matters. Many, I believe, are in their hearts inclined to give in their adhesion, but are afraid of appearing to desert their party. In short, I am convinced, that if certain names were enrolled on the side of the National Board, the main body of the clergy would declare in its favour; that is, I mean, so far as to express their willingness, now that it is established, to act under it. I suspect, indeed, that a movement in that direction has partially commenced. But it has been somewhat subterraneous; for many are still afraid to speak their sentiments aloud.

It was the apprehension that the supposed threat of withholding patronage might, from the causes explained before, check still farther the open avowal of these feelings which induced me to take my pen thus hastily in hand. I felt that the juncture is critical, and I have written just on the spur of the moment, trusting to that as my apology for the crude and undigested manner in which these suggestions are put forward. I have very little acquaintance with the details of my subject, and throw out my thoughts as they arise, for the consideration of those whose leisure will admit of a fuller

examination. I wish first to break the ice for others; and having done so, shall conclude with expressing my anxious wishes and offering up my anxious prayers that my brethren may be led carefully to survey the ground on which they take their stand, and to try well the firmness of the foundation on which they would build their defences, if they would continue to provoke the hostility of the Government. No party feeling, nor fancied point of honour, nor fear of man's opinion, nor of what old associates may think, can justify them in risking the safety of the Church. Many of our body, I know, lament that so much ground has been already lost, and fear that they have gone too far to retrace their steps. To this I answer, "Better late than never." If a matter of grave and practical importance has been indolently slumbered over, hastily decided, or rashly judged, and if they cannot repair the temporal losses they have thereby incurred, they owe it to truth, to justice, and to God, to confess their error, and, like Christians and like men, to own that they have been wrong. If, indeed, in a calm and dispassionate review, they think that, consistently with duty, they cannot join or act under the National System, why then what conscience dictates must be done, "Though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." But let them count the cost, and let them not underrate the risk they run. Let them remember, that our rulers are determined on the scheme in

question. Nay, that many of them believe it to be the best plan that could be devised for the support and maintenance of the Protestant religion in the land. This latter I know to be the opinion of some who are high in power.

What then, I conclude by repeating, may not be the consequence of a persevering opposition, upon our part, to a measure, in the view of Government, so important and so indispensable to the welfare of the country? If we stand thus in their way, may it not dispose them to those counsels which are ever ready to suggest the expediency of our entire removal? If, with a pertinacity which appears unaccountable to many, we would resist and run down a scheme calculated, as they are convinced, for the general interest, and more especially for the interest of our own people,—will they not be tempted to consider the Establishment as an incubus, even upon the Protestant religion itself? Attacked as we are on every other side, and assailed in every other direction, should we not ponder well the grounds on which we can feel it our duty thus to provoke the hostility of our still remaining friends; thus to incite a Government, hitherto our firm allies, to join the cry, re-echoed from so many quarters, "Down with it! Down with it even to the ground!"

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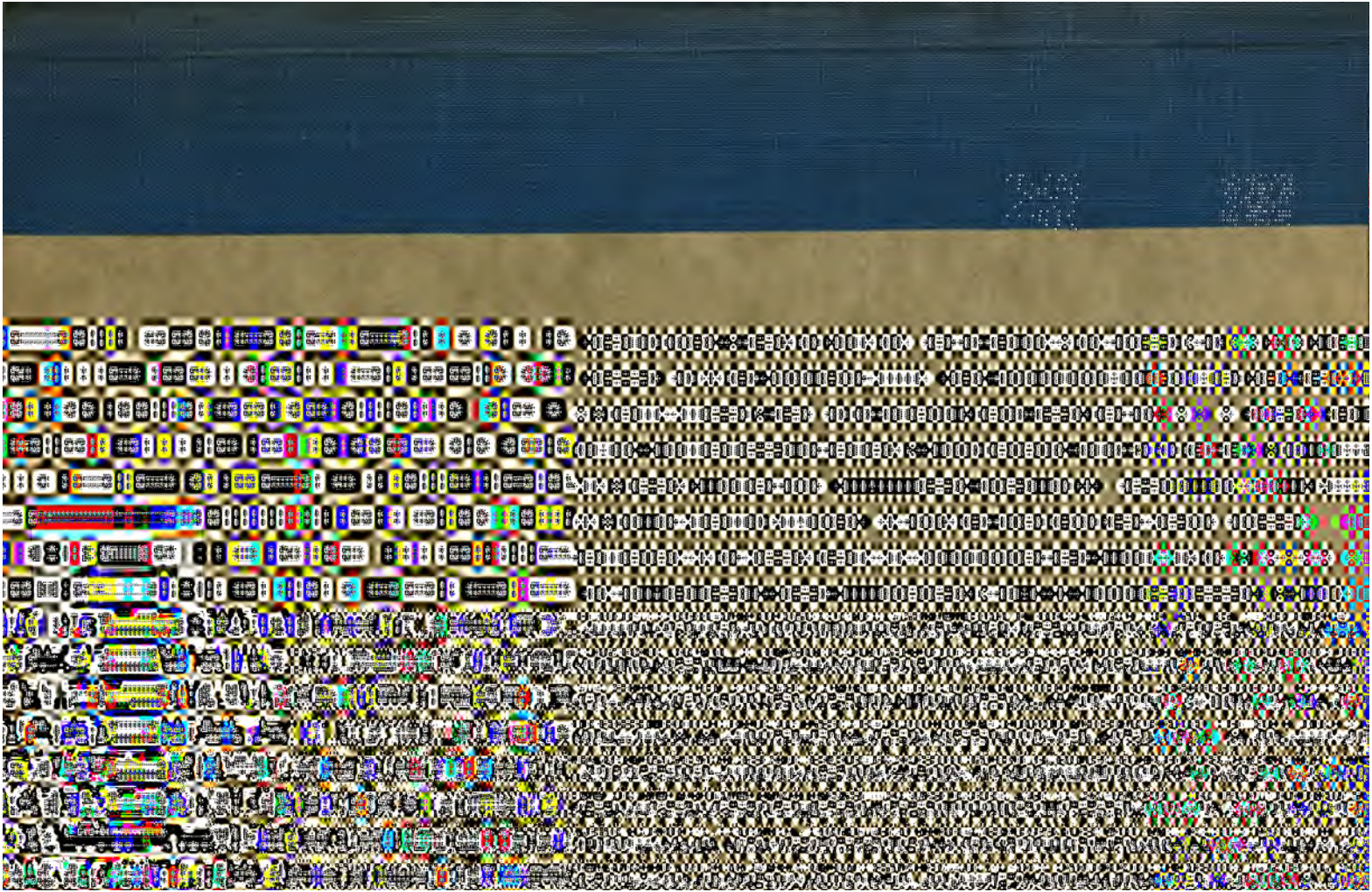
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